

Amendments to the Claims:

Claims 11, 15 and 20 are amended as set forth hereinafter.

Listing of Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Claims 1 to 10 (Cancelled).

11. (Currently Amended) A method for detecting the actuation of an operator-controlled element actuatable to assume different degrees of displacement, the method comprising the steps of:

5 realizing different operator-controlled functions of said operator-controlled element in dependence upon the degree of displacement of said operator-controlled element;

actuating said operator-controlled element against a spring force with two degrees of displacement being characterized by two different spring constants, respectively;

10 determining a quantity which characterizes the spring constant ~~prevailing~~ at the actual degree of displacement actuation of said operator-controlled element; and,

detecting at least one of said operator-controlled functions of the operator-controlled element in dependence upon said  
15 determined quantity which characterizes the spring constant.

12. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11, comprising

the further steps of:

detecting the degree of displacement of said  
operator-controlled element utilizing a sensor;

5 causing said sensor to generate a measurement signal in  
dependence upon said degree of displacement;

determining a time-dependent course of said measurement  
signal;

10 selecting a slope of said time-dependent course of said  
measurement signal as said quantity characterizing the spring  
constant; and,

detecting said at least one operator-controlled function in  
dependence upon the slope of said measurement signal.

13. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 12, comprising  
the further step of detecting said at least one of said  
operator-controlled functions when the slope of said  
time-dependent course of said measurement signal lies in a  
5 pregiven region.

14. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 13, wherein said  
pregiven region is defined by a threshold value.

15. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 13, comprising the  
further step of selecting said pregiven region so that the  
time-dependent ~~change~~ course of said measurement signal occurs  
only via an automatic reset of said operator-controlled element  
5 caused by an automatic reduction of said spring force.

16. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 15, wherein said automatic reset is achieved with an abrupt reduction of said spring force.

17. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 16, wherein said abrupt reduction of said spring force is effected by the spring constant assigned to the corresponding operator-controlled function.

18. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11, wherein said operator-controlled element is an accelerator pedal of a motor vehicle; said at least one operator-controlled function is a kick-down function or an escape-switch function to overcome an  
5 activated speed limiting; and, at least one degree of displacement of said accelerator pedal in the vicinity of a stop is assigned to said at least one operator-controlled function.

19. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11, comprising the further step of detecting said at least one operator-controlled function only when said at least one operator-controlled function is detected several times within a  
5 pregiven time interval.

20. (Currently Amended) An arrangement for detecting the actuation of an operator-controlled element actuatable to assume different degrees of displacement, the arrangement comprising:  
means for realizing different operator-controlled functions  
5 of said operator-controlled element in dependence upon the degree

of displacement of said operator-controlled element;

means for actuating said operator-controlled element against a spring force with two degrees of displacement being characterized by two different spring constants, respectively;

10 means for determining a quantity which characterizes the spring constant prevailing at the actual degree of displacement actuation of said operator-controlled element; and,

means for detecting at least one of said operator-controlled functions of the operator-controlled element in dependence upon  
15 said determined quantity which characterizes the spring constant.